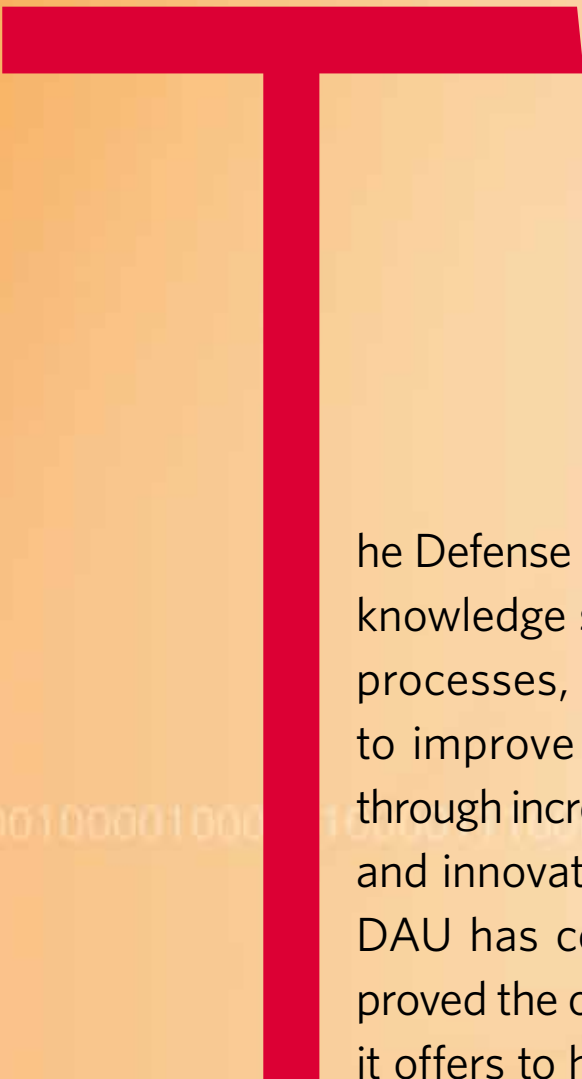# The Tools are Out There

DAU's Knowledge Sharing Capabilities

Andrea Reese ■ *Carol Scheina*

The Defense Acquisition University defines knowledge sharing as combining people, processes, and information technology to improve organizational performance through increased efficiency, effectiveness, and innovation. Over the past few years, DAU has continually reviewed and improved the online knowledge sharing tools it offers to help the acquisition workforce more efficiently locate the information they need to perform their duties.

In 2009, DAU began creating and enhancing a set of online knowledge-sharing tools to support defense acquisition professionals. It began with ACQuipedia, an online encyclopedia that defines acquisition topics and serves as a gateway to the most relevant policy, formal courses, communities of practice, Ask A Professor questions and answers, best practices, video, and other assets.

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on a topic will send you directly to that page in the handbook. Table of contents topics are available in the left-hand menu, and you can also use clearly labeled navigation buttons to view each individual page in the handbook.

"I am a digital immigrant who prefers hard copies of what I read and a linear format to reading through information. Having said that, I found the interactive Tool Kit to be very user-friendly," said one user. "I didn't spend a great deal of time exploring, but the implementation of the Tool Kit provides a lot of information. If one is looking for something specific, the table of contents allows the researcher to start branching in the right direction. If one is not looking for something specific, the Tool Kit invites a curious pilgrim many directions in which to start looking and to stumble on interesting information."

DAU went on to Web-enable essential acquisition guidebooks and charts, including the Program Manager's e-Tool Kit, the Defense Acquisition Guidebook, the Integrated Defense AT&L Life Cycle Management Chart, and the Contract Pricing Reference Guides soon to be launched. Several of those resources link back exhaustively to ACQuipedia articles, giving users one-stop information on key acquisition terms. DAU also introduced a new knowledge sharing system, the Defense Acquisition Portal, which provides easy access to those and other already-established and popular online tools. This article discusses the new tools available and how the enhancements benefit acquisition workforce members.

Program Managers e-Tool Kit

For more than 10 years, DAU has been printing the Program Managers Tool Kit, a popular handbook that outlines tips and best practices in acquisition management, leadership, and problem solving. Due to the high costs of printing, the Tool Kit was updated in 18- to 24-month intervals. As a result, some references in the book became obsolete before a new version was printed, and updated content couldn't be added to the handbook for months—sometimes years. Furthermore, the print format limited the amount and type of content the Tool Kit could provide to the workforce, as information had to be tailored to fit on a limited number of size-constrained pages and users had to search manually for any references in the text.

In 2009, DAU decided to convert the Tool Kit into a Web version, which resides at <https://pmtoolkit.dau.mil>. The e-Tool Kit is easily updateable, and key text and diagrams now link directly to cited policy, related communities of practice, and comprehensive ACQuipedia articles.

When you visit the e-Tool Kit, you'll encounter a table of contents listing all information in the handbook, and clicking

Defense Acquisition Guidebook

Like the Program Managers e-Tool Kit, the Defense Acquisition Guidebook (DAG) began as a print product. In 2002, DAU put the Guidebook online to facilitate user access and content updates. Recently, DAU redesigned the DAG Web site, located at <https://dag.dau.mil>, to give the acquisition workforce new ways to access valuable information such as guidance for implementing policy changes in DoD Instruction 5000.02 and information on implementing policy changes in the Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act of 2009.

The redesigned DAG also provides several other new features:
- A revised structure that improves readability and allows users to view more than one paragraph at a time.
- A more precise search feature that allows users to narrow initial results to the most relevant topics.
- A Defense Acquisition Portal Quick Links feature that places a wide array of tools at the user's fingertips. These include the Defense Acquisition Portal; DAU's home page, where available courses can be viewed and scheduled; the Program Manager's e-Tool Kit; the DAU-hosted ACQuipedia, with articles on many key acquisition topics; and a Best Practices site, featuring access to proven best practices on an array of subjects.
- A "Browse Topic Tags" feature that lets users see what topics others have "tagged" DAG content with, with links to the content itself. The more often a tag is used, the larger and bolder that tag's font becomes.

Also like the e-Tool Kit, table of contents topics are available in the left-hand menu, and you can also use clearly labeled navigation buttons to view each page in the guidebook, providing enhanced navigation capabilities and also allowing users to bookmark individual pages.

"Love the general simplification of the site," commented one user. "The rest of the changes make sense with respect to ease of finding and reading content."

Integrated Defense AT&L Life Cycle Management Chart

The printed version of the Integrated Defense AT&L Life Cycle Management Chart, also known as the "wall chart," existed for many years before DAU put the chart online in 2003. The six-square-foot chart posed a challenge to put online in readable format. DAU came up with the innovative idea of allowing users to click on various sections of the chart to zoom in on content. In addition, the chart website provided on-demand articles to further inform the workforce about the various chart components.

With the release of new acquisition policy in DoDD 5000.01 and DoDI 5000.02, DAU decided not to just update the chart, but also to update its capabilities. The new chart highlights "zoom-able" segments as you roll over them and lets you navigate among large segments using arrows or a dynamic mini-map that also tracks where you are located in the chart. Streamlined phase and process views help you navigate specific stages or career areas of the acquisition process with ease. In addition to this new intuitive interface, the chart now links hundreds of acquisition process components to official guidance, directives, and other resources. The chart can be found at <https://acc.dau.mil/ifc/>.

Contract Pricing Reference Guides

DAU's latest knowledge sharing effort involves the Contract Pricing Reference Guides, which are a set of five reference volumes maintained by the Office of the Deputy Director of Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy for Cost, Pricing, and Finance to "provide instruction and professional guidance for contracting personnel [*using*] detailed discussion and examples applying pricing policies to pricing problems" (<www.acq.osd.mil/dpap/cpf/contract_pricing_reference_guides.html>). The guides have been available online in PDF format, with basic hyperlinking and intra-document search features.

Recently, due to Government Accountability Office reports of contract pricing issues, interest in contract pricing has increased. Accordingly, DPAP is working with DAU to build a more robust, interactive online version of the guides to help sharpen pricing skills and to support repeatable success. Near the end of summer 2010, DAU will release a Web-based version that makes the guides searchable, linkable, and available from any Internet connection. Links to policy and authoritative guidance will further enrich the tool. Many of the navigation capabilities that have made knowledge sharing tools like the e-Tool Kit and the DAG accessible will also support the guides. The end result will be an easy-to-use tool better aligned to the contracting workforce's needs.

Defense Acquisition Portal

The Defense Acquisition Portal (DAP) unites all the tools discussed along with other essential instructions, directives, manuals, and guidebooks in a single site at <https://dap.dau.mil>. Deployed in July 2009, the DAP is a one-stop source for acquisition information and tools, replacing the AT&L Knowledge Sharing System. On the DAP, you can find information on all phases of the acquisition process, requirements generation, budget development, and more. The DAP also provides links to all of DAU's knowledge sharing systems—such as the DoD Best Practices Clearinghouse, the Acquisition Community Connection, and the DAU home page.

The DAP provides information specific to the acquisition workforce such as career management, career planning, leadership training, and human capital initiatives as well as information about the 4th estate. It also offers acquisition career gateways, which includes career certification guides, course enrollment procedures, continuous learning and job-specific courses, and blogs by career field experts on each of the 12 acquisition career fields. Since being deployed, the DAP has had more than 110 million page views.

The Tools Are Out There

Acquisition professionals need quick and easy access to an abundance of information that is kept current as policies change. DAU recognizes the challenges the workforce faces, and the university's knowledge sharing tools stand ready to help you perform their job with dynamic search tools and updated reference materials. Numerous users have commented on the simplification of DAU's tools and how information is easier to read and find, and the university continues to seek opportunities to get the right information to the workforce at the point of need.

You can view short videos and get additional details on all elements of DAU's knowledge sharing tools at <https://acc.dau.mil/at&lkm>.

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